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A VISIT TO BAILEY, BANKS & BIDDLE'S ART ROOMS.

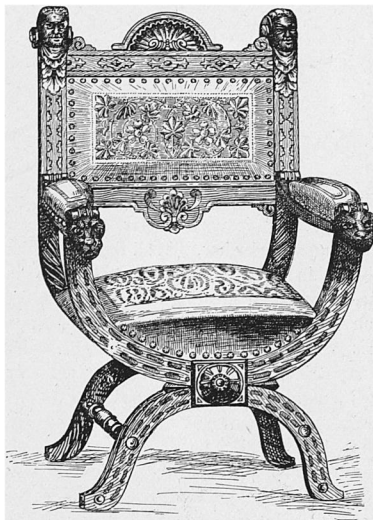
AT No. 53, Boulevard Montmorency, is a house which may be distinguished at a distance by the medallion, in gilt bronze, of Louis XV. inserted in the iron-work of its balcony. Some passers-by look upon the medallion with an evil eye, but we have the proprietor's word that no political preferences are expressed by it; that it simply denotes his taste for the artistic productions of the eighteenth century, with which the house is filled.

It is the residence of Edmond de Goncourt, the man who of all others has done the most to bring the industrial art of the last century into vogue once more. From its door, surmounted by a grille in wrought iron, to the last landing of its stairs, it is packed with terra-cottas, bronzes, and porcelains of the "*siècle aimable par excellence*," of the period of the Pompadour and of Marie Antoinette, the time of Clodion and Gouthière, of Boucher and Watteau; when, it may be truly said, Art first became domestic, and turned from public and semi-public functions to the appropriate adornment of the houses of ordinary citizens.

This was, above all things, a homage to woman, and shows that the gallantry of the time was not wholly superficial; for the male of the period was very seldom to be found at home, and, so far as his own gratification was concerned, had little reason to care about its deco-

ration. Woman's taste reigned supreme. It was for her, and in great measure by her, that all these charming things were designed; and she succeeded in creating the most beautiful style of interior decoration (its purpose considered) that has ever been imagined; a style which, after an interregnum of masculine bad taste, is now again paramount throughout the civilized world.

This art of pre-revolutionary days, of which our own colonial style was the faint and distant echo, was born at a lucky moment. Pompeii had been laid bare, and sufficient was already known of the true classic principles to disgust people with the rigidity and pomposity of the style of Louis XIV. and with the meaningless contortions of the Rococo. Japan and China had already sent much of their most beautiful work westward, and it had been imitated in a hundred manners. But the spirit of the age was too strong to be subdued to mere imitation. No one thought of copying for mantel-ornaments the friezes of Roman temples, or of designing carpet-patterns after Japanese *foukousas*, but from every source were absorbed new ideas of the beautiful, to be expressed in original work bearing the stamp of the time and of the nation. Nothing has since appeared to supplant it permanently. The heavy Empire style, the weak and



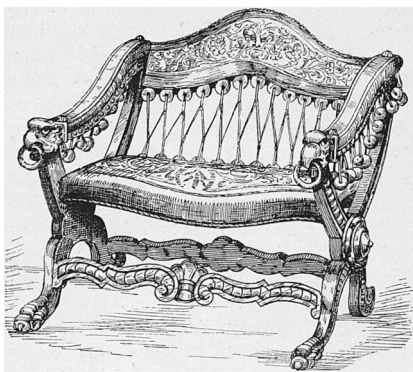
CARVED LEATHER CHAIR IN THE ART ROOM.

Both leather and wood carved by hand. In the style of pieces in the Historical Furniture Collections of the Munich Galleries.

uncomfortable Victorian Gothic, have had their day and disappeared. Not all the efforts of the dealers in modern antiques can bring them in fashion again. But there is not a manufacturer nor a designer of our day who does not draw inspiration from the things of the last century. In regretting the past and in gathering up its vestiges the connoisseur of the Boulevard Montmorency has done better than he knew. He has not merely set the fashion for collectors, but for the world at large. So that now, were a chevalier or a marquise of the old régime, a Lafayette or a Rocham-

beau, or any of the fair Philadelphians of their acquaintance, to return to this planet and their accustomed haunts, they would find things less seriously changed, as regards the pleasure of the eyes at least, than twenty or even a dozen years ago.

Descendants of these last, inheritors of their tastes, well know where they may find the means of beautifying their homes, a need now become common to both sexes. In the art rooms of Bailey, Banks & Biddle there is gathered the largest and best-selected stock of objects for home decoration in Philadelphia. Some of these are copies of eighteenth-century models, such as the Fontenoy vases, the originals of which cost the Duc d'Aumale, at the Double sale, 150,000 francs, and the splendid



CARVED LEATHER CHAIR IN THE ART ROOM.

From model in Munich Gallery.

eighteenth-century table, inlaid with porcelain medallions of Louis XVI. and



VASE, OLD VIENNA STYLE.

The scheme of decoration in blue and gold with bronze mountings originated by Mr. Joseph T. Bailey. Paintings from the originals by François Le Moitiére, "Diana and Iphigenia" and "The Rape of Europa." Owned by Bailey, Banks & Biddle.

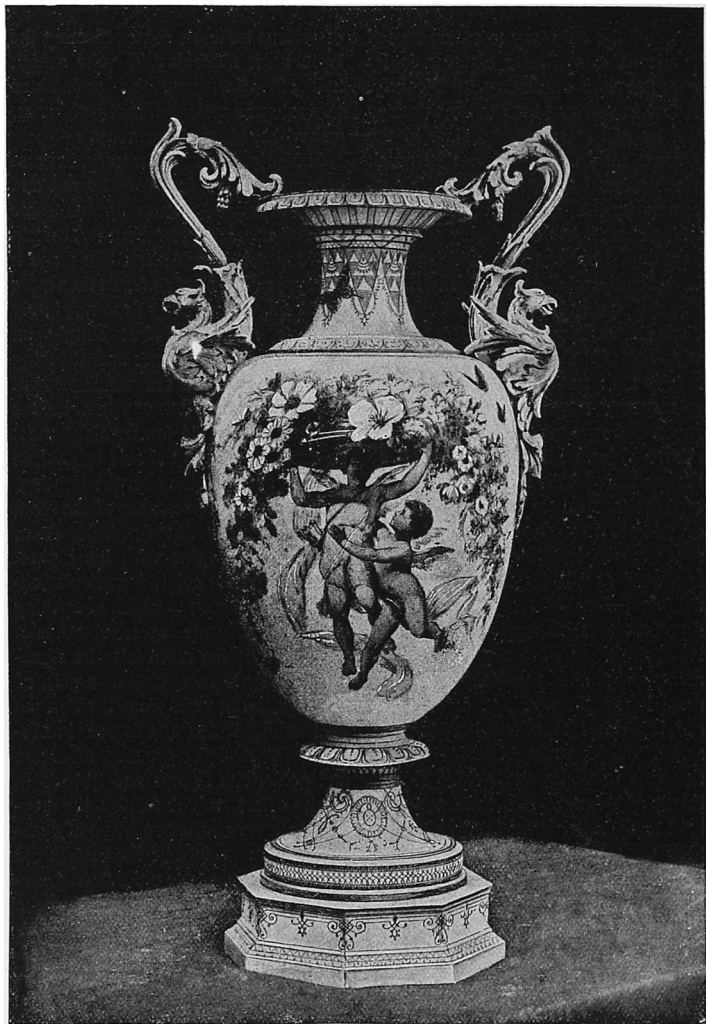
the ladies of his court. Others, while not direct copies, are full of the charm of the style. Here are cabinets in vernis Martin, half-round, oval, rectangular, triangular, mounted with chiselled and gilt bronze, painted with Watteau-like groups, and filled with rare and costly bric-à-brac. There is a collection of miniatures, on porcelain and on ivory, of powdered, patched, and painted beauties. Here, again, is a lot of Dresden figurines, charming little shepherdesses, and yet more charming gallants, the delight and the solace of the late Mr. Vanderbilt. And in another case are East Indian figurines in Worcester ware, equally animated, but much more sober in color.

But this gives hardly an idea of the variety of objects and of styles, of shapes and colors and materials, all, nevertheless, brought into harmony by the one prevailing idea which we moderns have borrowed from the eighteenth century,—the idea that everything in the interior furnishings of a house should be in accordance with women's tastes, should be adapted to feminine manipulation. No sharp angles, no discordant colors, no forms too heavy or too rude. From end to end of the rooms this idea rules. Whether one listens to the musical chimes of the tall, old-fashioned clocks in carved oak or mahogany cases, or examines the sets of table-ware in rich blue and gold Crown Derby, or in Doulton ware specially decorated with floral designs of poppies, arrow-heads, and brambles, or Minton game plates, painted by Mussill with pheasants, grouse, and kingfishers, or admires the novel combination of Mexican onyx and Limoges enamel in some mantel-

ornament, or the pleasant contrast of celadon ware and gilt bronze in a library inkstand, the same influence is everywhere apparent. Within the prescribed bounds there is no end to the variety; but it never oversteps these bounds. One may even come upon a Rococo clock in ormolu and pink marble, but its curves are not so extravagant as usual; or an example of the Empire, in gold and onyx, but it has somewhat of the unexpected grace of a design by Prud'hon. One of the crazes of the Empire, that for tall lamps "à la Romaine," developed and modified to meet modern requirements, is fully exemplified. There are perhaps a dozen different styles, in iron, old silver, bronze, with shades of porcelain or opaque or opalescent glass, or—latest Parisian fantasy—of silk and guipure. Here are Renaissance aiguères and snuff-boxes of the Directory, flambé ware from the Royal Berlin factory, and colored bronzes by Amaties and by Picault, but not an object which is not sure to be especially pleasing to women.

In a charming little book, which should be in everybody's library,* the genial *littérateur*, best known, perhaps, as Bachelor Bluff, points out that good taste is as much within the reach of modest as of liberal incomes. "But," he adds, "let me not be misunderstood. Nothing can be done worthily without some money. Let no man or woman put trust in the devices set forth in various books, under the name of household art, by which inferior things are made to put on the seeming of better things." To make a house pretentious by means of shams, he hints, were easy enough; but trickery is not

* My House: An Ideal. By Oliver B. Bunce.



CREAM-AND-GOLD DECORATED VASE.

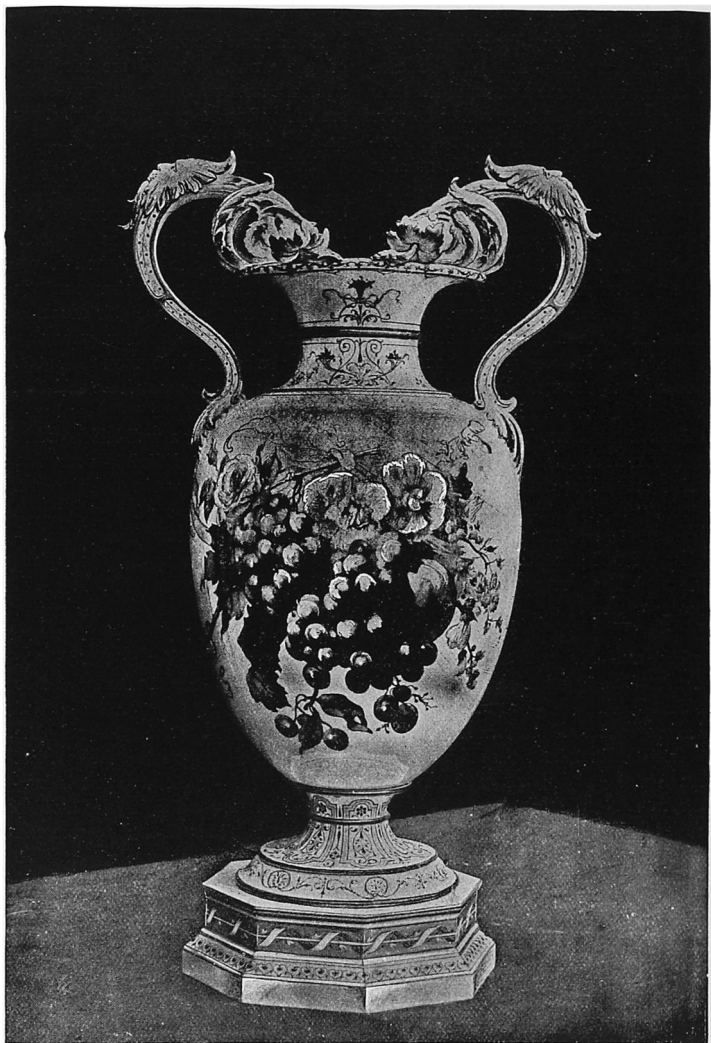
Light ground, flowers and figures in color. This and the vase represented on page 69 the original and only ones executed by the Royal Berlin Porcelain Works for the German National Exhibition held in Munich, 1888. Owned by Messrs. Bailey, Banks & Biddle, Philadelphia.

art, and the only way to secure a good result at a moderate expense is by choosing and combining intelligently. A few hints as to how to do this may not be considered out of place in the present article. It is true that much trouble has been saved to their customers by the firm in absolutely banishing shams, and in refusing to admit anything, however real, which would be decidedly out of keeping. But it may be set down as an axiom that where a choice is possible it is necessary; and a wide choice is certainly possible here.

It is well not to try for too much splendor or magnificence in any one room. Any considerable number of showy objects are little likely to be harmonious. This is the fault that is oftenest committed in furnishing a drawing-room; so often that some sensitive people will not have a drawing-room at all, for fear they might fall into this mistake. "If," they will say, "we have this onyx and gilt centre-table, we must have a gilt and onyx mantel-set; and then the furniture must be in gilt wood, to correspond, and, oh dear! there is no having any sort of drawing-room but the regulation one in white and gold." Now, this is all wrong. It is the fact that a light key of color is the mode, and is in itself desirable. But one may imagine a scheme, all in light tints, which shall lead up step by step to some few points of greater brilliancy than the rest. Let a beginning be made with some delicate tint, not white, for the walls, and porcelains will be found to tell against that, and gilt bronze even against the porcelains. The more brilliant the light or the color, the less space should it fill. But with due attention to the qualities

of various textures, some reflecting the light, some absorbing it, quite a high key of color may be maintained throughout a room without garishness, and without loss of harmony.

Similarly, it is not necessary, because one may wish a few very elegant and costly articles, to keep up the same scale of expense throughout. A certain graduation is possible here also; and it always leads to a better result than mere uniformity. Harmony does not imply absolute monotony, but simply an avoidance of crude tones and shocking contrasts. Because one would not put cloth of gold by cloth of frieze, it does not follow that the former alone must be used. Attention should be paid, in the first place, to the size, the lighting, and the general appearance of the room which it is proposed to furnish. Then, as a painter begins with his highest light and purest color, a particular object will be chosen to which everything else is to be in some degree subordinate. It may be (if the room is to be of extreme magnificence) one, or a pair, of the large Berlin vases from the German National Exhibition of this year in Munich. Their light grounds of cream and gold, with figures and flowers in bright colors, might furnish the keynote for a very brilliant scheme of decoration. Or it might be the vase in old Vienna style, made to order from drawings of Mr. Joseph T. Bailey. Or a marble by Albano or by Cambi may be chosen,—lovely female figures with flowing drapery. If other statuettes or groups are considered desirable, a terracotta by Carrière-Belleuse or a colored and gilt bronze by Guillemin may lead the eye to lower tones and less costly ornaments.



ROYAL BERLIN PORCELAIN VASE.

In same tints as vase shown on page 67, the two being the original and only ones executed by the Royal Berlin Porcelain Works for the Munich Exhibition, 1888. - Also owned by Bailey, Banks & Biddle, Philadelphia.

The hall, being, like the drawing-room, semi-public, had best be considered at the same time with it. It is customary to treat it in rather sombre tones; but they should not be too sombre. Old tapestries make a suitable wall-covering, and against them nothing can be more in place than one of the old-fashioned "grandfather's" clocks already mentioned. In some of these one might sink a small fortune. Seven hundred dollars will buy one in carved oak case with elegantly-chased brass mountings, sounding the hours on metal tubes the tones of which recall the chimes of an English cathedral. Others, handsome, but not so beautifully carved as this, can be had for one-third the price; and a handsome hall clock, "The Colonial," with fine English movement, for one hundred dollars. There are also hall clocks in Buhl-work of ebony and brass, and mantel clocks of every variety of shape and material. Let us mention just one of these, in a case of repoussé and chased silver, with figures in gold on a dark-blue enamel face, whose cost is only two hundred and fifteen dollars.

Suitable for either hall or dining-room are some very handsome chairs in carved and incised leather. This sort of work, which was brought to a high pitch of perfection during the late Middle Age and the Renaissance, has only recently been revived in Europe. Naturally, the workmen follow, to some extent, the old designs, which are bold arabesques intermixed with flowers, fruits, and foliage. All of these are carved with the knife in thick sole-leather, with little or no aid of stamps, rollers, or punches. The forms affected by the seats are in keeping with the

bold and somewhat masculine character of the work. Several are modelled upon the antique folding chairs, and all are rather too severe for use in other parts of the house than those indicated.

Having mentioned the dining-room, let us pass in review the things belonging to it. Baudelaire, in one of his "Little Poems in Prose," has compared a good conscience to a bright and orderly display of cooking-implements; and certainly they have this much in common, that the former may frequently be said to depend on the latter. But still more truly may it be said that all the faculties of the mind and soul are stimulated over a well-laid board in a properly-appointed dining-room, and that they are correspondingly depressed among surroundings of the opposite sort. Nothing distinguishes the civilized man from the savage more than the manner of his taking food. And it is not necessary to be a Brillat-Savarin. The true gourmand is one who "eats with his eyes," as the saying is. Yet in nothing is the American housewife so often deficient as in her appreciation of these facts. It is quite commonly the case that the dining-room is the dreariest in the house. The temptation is irresistible to describe a dining-room of no alarming costliness, but agreeable and comfortable. The walls have a dado of dark stained oak in large and simple panels. Above this is a paper of an orange-brown tint studded with golden stars. The ceiling is ivory-white, with large geometrical compartments in two tones of gray, and a very small and sparse patterning in gold. The window-curtains are of brown Holland, edged with écru lace. A shelf runs around the room at the height at which



THE FONTENOY VASE.

In Sèvres *pâte tendre*, executed in duplicate for King Louis XV. on the occasion of the Fontenoy victory. The medallions represent episodes of that celebrated battle. An artistically executed fac-simile pair is shown in Messrs. Bailey, Banks & Biddle's Art Room.

the frieze usually commences. It sustains a few pieces of porcelain and faience of rich colors and striking designs. Besides the buffet, there is an old-fashioned corner cupboard containing some delicate glass and china. For the rest, the show of silver, porcelain, and glass for every-day use sufficiently enlivens the room. There are no steel engravings of dogs and birds, no chromos of fruits and flowers, no atrocious English hunting-scenes. Here and there is an exquisite Minton plate fastened to the wall as a plaque, or a piece of some other decorative ware similarly displayed. Here, again, are no beams of bog-oak carved and gilded; no enormous mantel, reaching to the ceiling; no windows of stained glass. Nothing could well be simpler; yet when filled with company no room looks better adapted for its purpose, and when empty none so insinuatingly suggests it.

The ceramic art of our time hardly receives from amateurs the consideration it deserves. It scarcely ever strikes them that the cups out of which they drink, the plates off which they eat, are, or may be, products of artistic skill and taste and invention. Yet every new shape and color and pattern of decoration implies the exercise of artistic faculties of no ordinary sort. It may not often occur to our theorists and writers upon art, but it is the case nevertheless, that the men who superintend and direct the work of the principal modern potteries are often men of great natural abilities and of broad and enlightened views, as well as of a highly-specialized education.

The Worcester Royal Company is particularly fortunate in having as di-

rector of its porcelain works Mr. R. W. Binns, F.R.S., of whom his friend Mr. Bailey well says that no other man has done so much in our time for the advancement of English porcelain. At Bailey, Banks & Biddle's are some of the most beautiful Worcester pieces of the year. Next to these the decorated Doulton faience is noticeable.

In a set of plates decorated by Alcock, of the Copeland Company, each plate bears, for central subject, a classical figure—Thetis, or CEnone, or Galatea—in the faintest tones of white just tinged with color. The margins have jewelled borders recalling those necklaces and other personal ornaments of ancient Greek ladies recently disinterred by Schliemann at Mycenæ and in the Troad. Some of the Minton game plates may be classed with these. To give an idea of the brilliancy of their coloring, one must liken them to water-color drawings of which the tints have not yet dried. And this will not do them justice, for the beautiful quality of the material must be taken into account, and also the special difficulties of the art. It is, indeed, no small triumph when one draws from the furnace a piece of work which is in every way what it was intended to be,—form regular, glaze even and brilliant, color not over- or under-fired, perfectly vitrified, adherent, rich of tone, and sharp of outline. When one considers the risks which each of these drawings must run, one cannot but admire the boldness and the skill of the artist. Why, then, should we not make as much of his work as of that of the water-colorist, whose technique is so much easier, whose results are seldom finer? Why should we not

decorate our dining-rooms, at least, with these brilliant paintings, fixed forever upon porcelain, rather than with less permanent and less appropriate decorations?

To turn, however, from these *capit d'opera* of the potter's art, can one imagine a more smiling picture than that presented by a table fitly set with any one of these pretty services in light pink, or blue, or creamy yellow? Here are bouillon-cups with their covers, salad-bowls, dessert-plates worthy of fruit from the Hesperides. And, for breakfast, what an aroma the coffee must have which is drunk from such dainty cups!

Is it too much to ask that the library, also, be made cheerful and beautiful? Surely not. While looking at this multitude of things, many of them designed for use in a book-room, one cannot help thinking of the libraries he has been in which were only less desolate than their owners' dining-rooms. What sort of intellectual nourishment can a man obtain from volumes pent in black-walnut cases ranged against a bare white wall with a row of dusty plaster casts above? And what a life it must be when both the body and the mind have to be fed amid such surroundings! Let us listen once more on this point to Bachelor Bluff.

"We do not, in my house," he says, "connect literature with the stately solemnities of life. We do not see why a library must, perforce, be fur-

nished gravely; we see no necessary connection between heavy oak and the light fancies of the poets; and we are disposed to believe that the grave speculations of the moralists are more acceptable under cheerful than under uncheerful surroundings."

And he pleads for some bits of faience, bronze, and Limoges enamel to brighten the wall above the bookcases. De Goncourt, as regards books, less catholic in his tastes, agrees with him in this, or rather goes far beyond him. For what would Bachelor Bluff say to a study ceiling covered with Japanese embroidery in gold and colors on a ground of black silk? And what of his *bibliothèque de Boule*? But, apropos! why not, for a few cherished volumes, have a case in Buhl (or Boule, spell the name as you will)? or, say one of these cabinets in vernis Martin? And what would be better suited to enliven a library than this little vitrine à la Marie-Antoinette, with its collection of curious snuff-boxes, patch-boxes, and powder-boxes, themselves illustrating the history of their time, and their miniature paintings the mythology of the ancients?

In a library so fitted, need we say it? THE CONNOISSEUR would be received no longer as a missionary, as a pioneer, but as an old and tried friend. And not in the library alone; for the influence of the doctrines which it teaches would pervade the house.

R. RIORDAN.